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# THE SCHOOL REVIEW

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## THE LUNCH-ROOM AT THE ENGLEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

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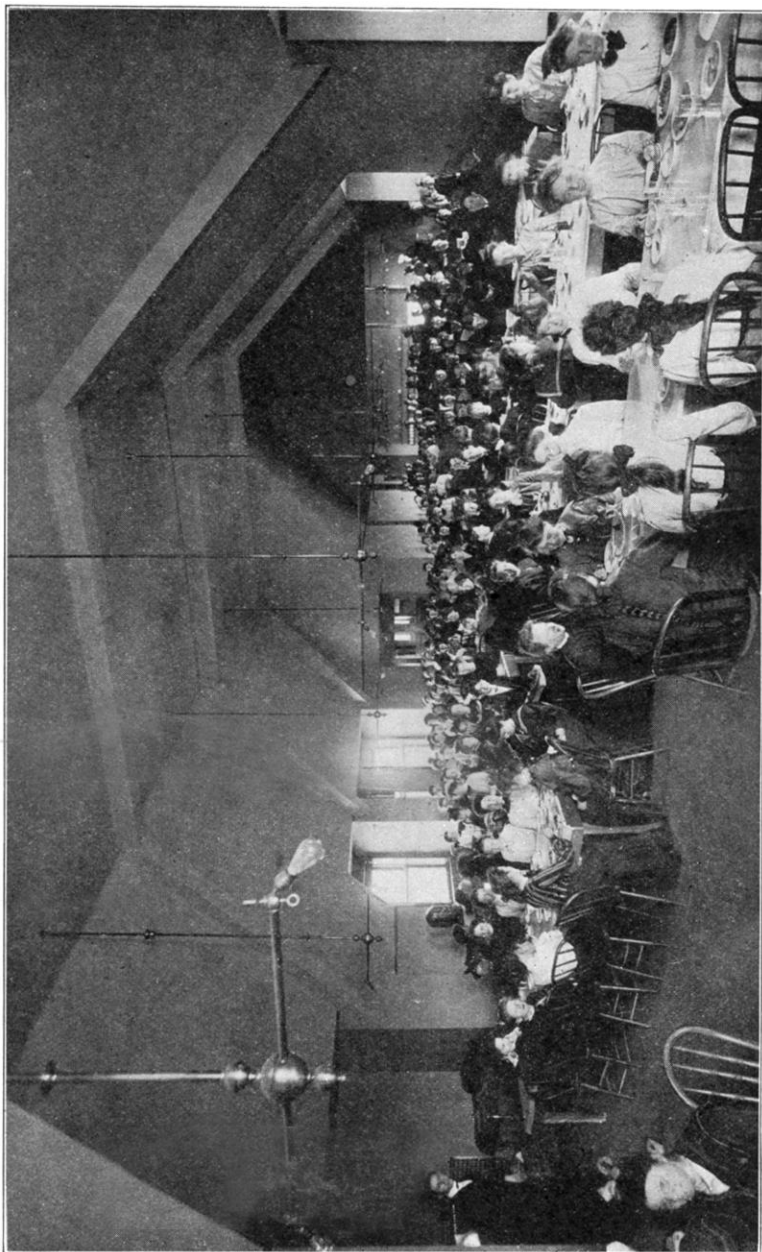
The American metropolitan grammar school usually serves a community so compact that the pupils can go home at noon. Union and high schools, on the other hand, draw their patronage from such extensive districts that this is out of the question for the majority of those in attendance. To meet this situation various arrangements have been tried. Of these the most common have been, first, a long noon intermission, as in the grammar schools; second, one long session; and, third, a short recess. The first, besides prolonging unnecessarily the hour of closing, has usually proved detrimental to the peace and comfort of the neighborhood. The second is too great a strain on teachers and pupils alike. The third, therefore, has in many places, of which Chicago is one, been adopted as affording a reasonable compromise; but along with its adoption there have arisen the need and the demand for a lunch service at once quick and excellent. To show how this situation has been met in one of the Chicago high schools, which may serve in essentials as a type of all, and to discuss some of the social and legal phases of the lunch-room problem, is the purpose of this paper.

The Englewood High School is located in the heart of what was ten years ago a rather sparsely settled suburb, but is now one of

the most populous and attractive districts in Chicago. The territory tributary to the school, which now has a population of about 125,000, is two and one-half miles long and two miles wide. Until the September of 1903 the lunch problem was a serious menace to the welfare of the school. Some of the pupils brought sandwiches, cake, and fruit from home. Some purchased waffles at a wagon on the street. Some rushed two blocks to a bakery where pie, dill pickles, and cream puffs were sold. Others refreshed themselves at an inconvenient soda-water fountain. Still others patronized a restaurant which it took them five minutes to reach, and where they waited ten before they were served with a repast which they consumed in five in order to get back to their classes on time. The result of these conditions was often, as one student put it, "a pain in the stomach, an ache in the head, a zero in the teacher's class-book, and a great daub of blueberry pie on the shirt waist." The afternoon classes were lifeless; the school building, during the afternoon session, was foul and slippery with remnants of lunch; and the school yard, to say nothing of adjacent streets and lawns, was so bestrewn with paper bags, banana peels, fragments of broken meats, and decadent bones that the residents and owners thereof were shaken by a chronic palsy which was due half to wrath and half to malaria.

The disadvantages of this situation were recognized and vigorously condemned by parents, pupils, teachers, and public at least as early as 1893, but it was not until July 16, 1902, that the board of education took definite action for relieving it, by authorizing the erection of a lunch-room. An addition, accordingly, arose adjacent to the school. In June, 1903, this improvement was complete, and in September of the same year the lunch-room was put in commission.

The building thus placed at the disposal of the school is a one-story structure, comprising two rooms—a kitchen, 19×25 feet, and a dining-room, 81×60 feet. The seating capacity of the latter is 432, and there are already signs that this will, at no distant date, begin to be overtaxed, as patronage flows in an ever-increasing stream, not only from the high school, but also from two adjacent elementary schools. The scheme of handling the crowds who hasten thither at recess may be understood by reference to the accompanying plan. The student enters from the school at the door *A* and passes down



THE LUNCH-ROOM—LAKE VIEW HIGH SCHOOL, CHICAGO

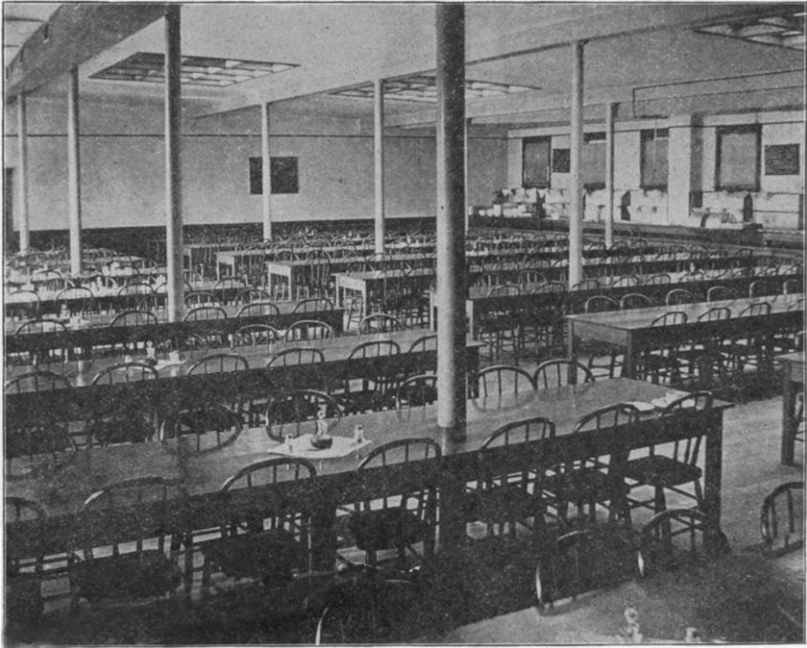
the aisle *B* to the counter *C*. At 1 he finds plates; at 2, bread, rolls, and butter; at 3, baked beans; at 4, meat and potatoes; at 5, salads; at 6, soup; at 7, pie, cake, and fruit; at 8, coffee and cocoa; at 9, milk; and at 10, ice-cream. When he arrives at the desk *E*, an attendant inspects what is on his plate and gives him a check for the amount he has taken. He next goes to a table and eats his luncheon. Finally he passes to the cashier's desk at *G*, presents his check, pays the sum it calls for, and is allowed to depart. It should be added that a low railing separates the tables from the aisles and counter.

Of course some of the pupils continue to patronize the establishments which they formerly frequented and many continue to bring their lunches from home. The latter have the privilege of eating in the lunch-room provided they buy something, however little, and it is a common thing for them to take a bowl of soup or a cup of cocoa in order to have the benefit of warm refreshment.

In the circumstances thus far explained there is nothing unusual. Nearly all high and union schools need such lunch-rooms, and many have them. In the management of the Englewood lunch-room there appears, however, a social phenomenon which, while it is not unique, is new, instructive, and noteworthy. The catering is not done by an individual for private gain; it is in the hands of the Englewood Woman's Club, the members of which are impelled by a desire for social service.

Though comparisons are odious, it must be said that the results of this arrangement have been pre-eminently satisfactory. Teachers of domestic science who have visited it and tested the service pronounce it almost ideal. The checking, serving, and business details are attended to by a committee of fifty ladies; and the item of salaries being thus reduced to a point much below that which a professional caterer could reach, while both the desire and need of profit are eliminated, a liberality of expenditure for food supplies ordinarily out of the question is made possible. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that, while the prices are as low as those of a bakery lunch, everything served is not only wholesome, but attractive to a degree not excelled by the cuisine of a good metropolitan café. Nor is this all. For the pupils of the school to meet daily, as this arrangement enables them to do, with so many of the best women of the community, is in

itself a privilege and an education. Their presence has already proved to be a powerful, though quite informal and indirect, factor in securing good discipline in the school, and the example which they are giving of an unselfish desire to be useful to the community at large cannot fail to inspire the pupils who see this daily object-lesson with some ideals of citizenship of which there is certainly need in America today.



Notwithstanding the attainment of these results, a good deal has been said, both officially and unofficially, in disparagement of the lunch-room proposition in general, and a disposition to withhold support from the ladies has been shown in some quarters. It has been asserted that the board of education has no legal right to construct or maintain lunch-rooms; that, granting the legal right, inasmuch as they injure the business of merchants located near the schools, they should never have been established; and that, now that they have been established, the board, in order to guard against extor-

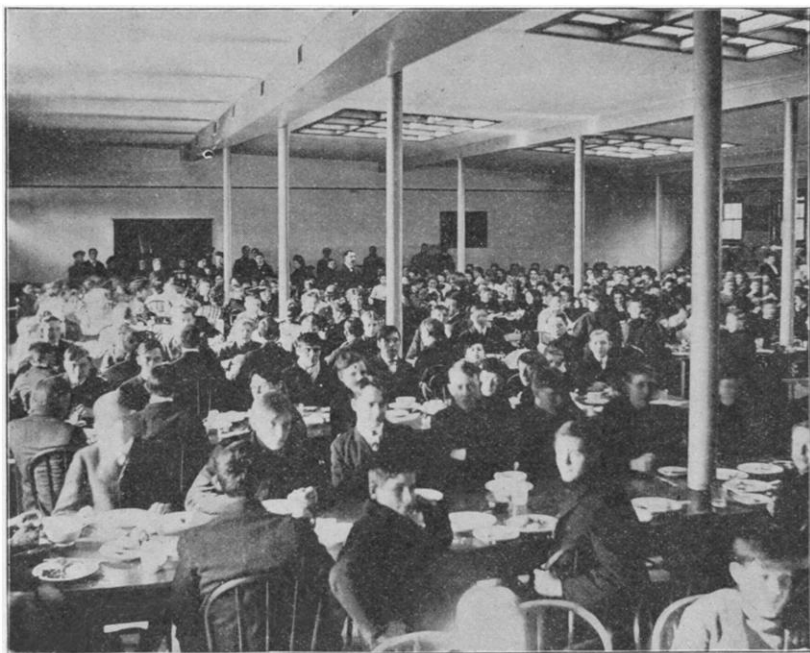
tion and an improper cuisine, ought to exercise a more rigorous supervision than it has. Although there is no evidence that these objections are strenuously entertained by a great number of people, it must be conceded that they are such as will naturally arise in the minds of those not in possession of full information on the subject, and that they consequently merit attention.

The idea that the school board has no legal right to provide lunch-rooms is based on a conception of its functions that is happily obsolescent. It is out of harmony with the sound modern practice of regarding the public school as the chief instrumentality whereby society is to be renewed, protected, and built up. The antithesis between it and the opinion handed down in the Chicago Normal School case, on December 9, 1904, by Judge Tuley, is marked. In that opinion he says:

The board of education is vested with authority in law to take all necessary steps to provide a complete and efficient system of free public schools. This broad law justifies the board in taking whatever action is necessary in relation to broadening the scope of school work. The constitutional provision for a school system confers great powers on boards of education, and I believe intentionally was made as broad as it could be.

Acting evidently in accordance with a similar conception of its powers and duties, the London School Board furnishes the pupils in certain districts with milk in the morning and a dinner at noon; not otherwise, they find, can the work of education go on. Similar conditions in New York are engaging the attention of the Salvation Army in an effort to provide similar assistance to those who need it. Indeed, "Food as a Factor in School Management," or some equivalent caption, will probably in times to come head a chapter in every up-to-date work on pedagogy. That chapter cannot be written here, but among the points it will establish will be the following: "Well-fed nations, individuals, and schools are orderly and conservative." "Hunger breeds anarchy." "Keep a good fire under your boiler, if you wish your engine to do good work." "An ounce of beef stew is worth a ton of scolding." "No hungry child can think successfully." "It is the duty of the school board to protect the health of pupils and to do whatever is needed to secure the advantages of punctuality, regular attendance, and good behavior in the schools." That the Englewood lunch-room has improved the school in all of these respects

is certain. There are now fewer colds and less dyspepsia among the pupils than formerly. Attendance and scholarship are correspondingly improved. From the afternoon session tardiness has been practically eliminated. There has been a marked improvement in the attention, behavior, and efficiency of the afternoon classes. The pupils themselves bear witness to the fact that the warm lunch renews



their strength for the afternoon classes, and say that the genial sociability of the lunch hour enables them to talk over the events of the morning with their friends, so that the temptation to loiter in the hall or whisper in the study-room is reduced. In view of these facts it is not too much to assert that, if the school board has the legal right to suspend unruly pupils, to heat its buildings, or to provide proper plumbing, it has also the legal right to build and operate lunch-rooms.

Granting all this to be true, however, it is still held that the lunch-room is a monopoly and ought not to exist because it injures the



business of neighboring tradesmen. One baker has closed his shop owing to its competition; the waffle man suffers; the soda fountain is no longer patronized. There has likewise been some diminution in the business of the doctors. To these arguments it is replied that the right of the lunch-room to exist should be judged by its effect on the whole community and not on a few individuals; that it has proved a boon to the mothers, whom it has relieved of the burden of putting up lunches, and to the children, who are no longer obliged to carry them; that the health of the young people is more important than the prosperity of the baker; and that the lunch-room, instead of injuring the business interests of the community, has actually benefited them, because, by making the children healthier, it has increased rather than diminished the consumption of food, so that what the apothecary loses in the sale of pills and soda-water the butcher more than gains in that of mutton and beef. It should be noted further that, had any of the merchants who complain of the competition of the lunch-room established a service adequate to the needs of the school at any time during the years when its want was so keenly felt, the board of education would have been more than glad to be relieved of the expense and responsibility which it has entailed. It was only with great reluctance and after long delay that they expended public money for a necessity which private enterprise could not or would not provide.

Driven thus from their outer works, the critics have still an inner line of defenses. The prices, they say, are too high; the quality of the food served is not what it should be; the children eat too much pastry and too little wholesome food. In order to remedy these evils the board should do two things: it should exercise a rigid supervision of the service, and it should charge a rental for the use of the lunch-rooms.

The first of these propositions is reasonable, and probably in some schools necessary. There are grounds for believing this to be so; but in the case of the Englewood lunch-room such supervision would be superfluous. Reference has already been made to the excellent quality of the food served. As to whether the prices are extortionate or not, the reader may judge from the subjoined table, which is a transcript of one of the bills of fare posted each day in the lunch-room:

Beef stew.....	5	Oyster soup.....	5
Chicken pie.....	5	Apple pie.....	5
Baked beans.....	5	Layer cake.....	5
Mashed potatoes.....	3	Plain cake.....	3
Nut salad.....	5	Doughnuts.....	1
Potato salad.....	5	Fruit.....	5
Tea biscuits.....	1	Ice-cream.....	5
Bread.....	1	Coffee.....	5
Ham sandwiches.....	5	Cocoa.....	3
Butter.....	1	Milk.....	3
Pickles.....	1		

The checks average between eleven and twelve cents, an amount which cannot be much greater than the cost of a lunch brought from home. Most men who are accustomed to eat at noon in a downtown restaurant will agree that anyone is in luck who, by paying thirteen cents, can have a dish of oyster soup, a portion of chicken pie, a hot biscuit and butter, and a doughnut "like mother used to make," all abundant in quantity, all appetizing, and all served, not by young men who grow surly unless bribed to do their duty, but by ladies whose presence would adorn any home or grace any social function.

The danger that the sweets will be consumed to the exclusion of the solids has been ingeniously and successfully avoided by two simple expedients. The quality of the latter is far better and the price far lower than those of the former. In most restaurants chicken pie costs about seven times as much as apple pie; here the prices are identical. The coffee, to take another item, is so weak that it is not only harmless, but also quite unattractive; hardly any is sold. In short, in comparison with the sale of articles that are unquestionably wholesome, the sale of those which are perhaps objectionable is insignificant, and this result has been attained without reducing the bills of fare to such Spartan proportions as might render it unattractive, or imposing any vexatious limitations such as the establishment, as has been done in some schools, of a table d'hôte.

From rigid supervision, therefore, it is certain that the patrons of the Englewood lunch-room would gain nothing. If the board should exact rent from the ladies, it is equally certain that the cuisine would be impaired. It is true that during the ten months from September 1, 1903, to June 30, 1904, the Woman's Club cleared over six hundred

dollars. It is perfectly proper to inquire why this money should not be paid into the treasury of the board. The reply which the ladies make is in essence as follows: "We have used our profits to assist in the charitable work of our club. If we pay rent, either it or our patrons must suffer. The results which we have attained have been possible only through the active co-operation of a large number of



ladies. If you deprive us of the possibility of aiding charity, you remove the motive which impels them to assist in this enterprise and without which we cannot get their aid. To hire servants to do the work which they have done would cost us at least ten dollars a day, or two thousand dollars for the school year. As a matter of fact, we could not hire such service at any price. We think that two thousand dollars is a sufficient rental for a building that cost eight thousand dollars, and that, having paid it, we are entitled to dispose of our profits as we see fit. There are few business men who, for the sake of a profit of three dollars a day, would undertake to feed

three hundred people. As a matter of fact, that amount is hardly a sufficient margin for safety. During some months, indeed, the lunch-room has been run at a loss; in September, 1904, for example, the receipts were \$673.42 and the expenditures \$830.90."

There are some who say that charity begins at home, and that the ladies should spend upon the school what they make from it. Not



unmindful of the justice of this contention, they have already begun to adorn the school grounds, and have provided a scholarship which is to be placed each year at the disposal of the most deserving member of the graduating class of the school, that she (I say "she" because the most deserving member is invariably a girl) may go to college. No board of education has ever done this; no private lunch-room contractor could do it if he would or would do it if he could. Indeed, it seems likely that the lunch-room may, at no distant day, be the means of providing for the high school, on a scale of liberality hitherto unknown and undreamt of, those maps, lantern slides, pictures, and

books, which no board of education is rich enough to furnish, and by the lack of which the efficiency of secondary education is everywhere so impaired.

In short, to grow to a point and an end, it may be said that the lunch-room, especially the lunch-room conducted by a woman's club, is at once a luxury and a necessity which no high or union school can afford to be without. It keeps the schoolhouse, the school yard, and the school neighborhood clean. It protects the health of the pupils. It saves their time. It improves their scholarship. In the discipline of the school it is a potent and useful factor. As an object-lesson in social service and civic duty it has a value. Legally, morally, pedagogically, financially, it ought to be and will be. If anyone wants to know what an ideal lunch-room is and can do for a school, he should visit the Englewood lunch-room and see for himself what it is and has done for the Englewood High School.

Actions, it is said, speak louder than words. So do figures, for they are nothing but frozen actions. As a feast commonly ends with cold victuals, an argument may therefore appropriately close with figures. At any rate, this arrangement, if not journalistically, is gastronomically correct, and is accordingly appropriate for the peroration of a discussion on a gastronomical subject. Which, as Dickens might have said, is the *raison d'être* of the location at the end of this paper of the following statistics concerning the Englewood High School lunch-room:

Receipts September, 1903, to June, 1904, inclusive - - -	\$6,146.14
Cost of operating same ten months:	
Salaries - - - - -	\$1,386.30
Fixtures - - - - -	351.55
Food - - - - -	<u>3,737.68</u>
Total - - - - -	<u>5,475.53</u>
Profit September, 1903, to June, 1904, inclusive - - -	\$ 670.61
Size of kitchen - - - - -	19 x 25
Size of dining-room - - - - -	81 x 60
Seating capacity - - - - -	425
Average cost per diem per pupil - - - - -	12 cents
Number of ladies who serve each day - - - - -	10
Number of ladies actually assisting - - - - -	50